THE EFFECTS OF A PROJECT HEADSTART PROGRAM UPON THE ADJUSTMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ABRAHAM LINCOLN KINDERGARTEN, KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS

A THESIS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is sincerely dedicated to my parents and brothers who constantly gave me support and encouragement to obtain my goal of completing this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

The effects of nursery school and kindergarten experience upon the young child have long been a question of interest to educators and psychologists. Ever since the organization of the first kindergarten by Froebel in 1837, the general assumption has been held that early preschool training leads invariably to greater gains in all areas of psychological and social development of the child.[1] It is this assumption that led Froebel to spend a considerable part of his life founding kindergartens and developing their curricula which was based on his belief that childhood play is an important experience in itself. Maria Montessori, another early leader in the preschool education movement, established a large number of nursery schools which emphasized sensory training and the teaching of the practical routines of daily life.[2]

These early preschool educators focused mainly upon developing new methods of early childhood education. No research was undertaken at this time to determine whether this early education actually did

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[1]Clark E. Moustakas, "Personality Studies Conducted in Nursery Schools," Journal of Educational Research, XLVI 1952, pp. 161-177.

[2]E. Mortimer Standing, Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work (New York: Mentor Press, 1957), pp. 40-45.

have a beneficial effect on the child. Only since the 1930's have experimenters gathered data, and engaged in empirical studies of preschool personality changes brought about by nursery school experience.[3]

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness that large numbers of children from poverty stricken areas have difficulties all through their school experience because of the lack of intellectual stimulation during their preschool years. When children are from disadvantaged backgrounds they have often been deprived emotionally as well as materially. As the relationship of lack of intellectual stimulation to poor school adjustment and hence frequently to social maladjustment becomes more widely recognized, many organizations are attempting to provide an educational experience for preschool children, especially those with disadvantaged backgrounds.

Several day care centers have recognized the need for preschool programs as a means to help enrich the lives of culturally disadvantaged children. The Day Nursery Association of Cleveland, Ohio operated on the principle that although children vary greatly in background and in ability, a sound nursery school philosophy in which individualization is implicit is as applicable and important for one group of children as another, though different educational emphases may be required.

Children who must spend most of their waking hours in a day care center desperately need the enriching educational experiences that might be expected to be provided by their mother could she be with them. The child who lives in a city slum with crowds of people who have neither the time nor the knowledge to devote to his special needs requires

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[3]Moustakas, op. cit., pp. 161-177.

an enriched background, whether or not his mother has employment. Therefore, the process of meeting the needs of the culturally disadvantaged preschool child from low-income areas involved the same basic essentials as the education of the three and four-year-olds of more privileged background.

The essence of nursery education is helping a child to learn essential facts about the outer world and the inner world, and how to separate fact from fantasy in order to be able to learn to manage both. Moral standards and attitudes are explicitly explained in relation to actual experiences. Involved throughout the nursery school experience is the most important aspect of human learning: the art of communication through words. However, the child from a culturally disadvantaged background has several interwoven social pressures such as poor housing, overcrowded dwelling, and racial discrimination that effects his intellectual and social abilities. In spite of these handicaps, a nursery school which includes parent counseling can usually promote a child's ability to learn. Moreover, the variety of everyday experiences available in a nursery school form a basis for wider learning and expression.[4]

Project Headstart, sponsored by the Office of Economic Opportunity, is one of the most salient educational movements in recent years to show an interest in preschool culturally disadvantaged children. Although conceived as a crash program and hurriedly planned, Project Headstart probably has been the most immediately successful and the

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[4]Eleanor Hosley, "Culturally Deprived Children in Day Care Programs," Children, X (September-October, 1963), pp. 175-179.

least critized of the Community Action Programs in the federal government's war on poverty. The project was designed to reach children of limited opportunity who would enter kindergarten or first grade for the first time, and to provide social and educational activities, health services, and nutritional aid to give these children the necessary help to start regular school on a more equal basis with children from higher economic and cultural backgrounds.[5]

Project Headstart has been a break through to a brighter life for many culturally disadvantaged children throughout the country. In an article by Francine Richard, "Giving Them a Headstart" many teachers in Headstart programs throughout the state of Illinois commented that the children in the programs made exceptional gains both socially and educationally. One teacher was quoted as saying, "The children developed communicative skill and the most amazing part to me was their social adjustment in such a short time. The children are not timid any longer, and they are not as selfish and self-centered as they were at the beginning of the summer program."[6] This comment was made near the middle of the summer program in Rockdale, Illinois.

Since there was national interest in the effect which the Project Headstart programs have upon preschool children the researcher decided to study the effects the Project Headstart program had on the preschool children who attended this program during the summer of 1966 in Kankakee, Illinois. The agency in which the researcher had her block

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[5]Francine Richard, "Giving Them a Headstart," Illinois Education, LIV (October, 1965), pp. 62-67.

[6]Ibid., pp. 62-67.

field placement is located in this city. There was great concern among the staff members of this agency as to the effects preschool training programs have on preschool children. This interest was not limited to the effects Project Headstart programs have on preschool children, but to the complete gamut of preschool training programs such as regular activities of nurseries and day care centers. The agency did not request the researcher to do this study, and this study was not done under the auspices of the agency. However, the results of this study can be valuable to the agency in which the researcher worked because it shows the effects of a Project Headstart program on a segment of preschool children who lived in the city of Kankakee.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a group of children who attended a Project Headstart program was better adjusted in kindergarten than a group of children who had not received preschool education prior to entering kindergarten.

The researcher hoped this study would show that preschool education is helpful to preschool children in their social and emotional adjustment in the regular classroom setting. It was a major assumption of the researcher that children who are well adjusted socially and emotionally make greater academic achievements than children who are not well adjusted socially and emotionally. The major hypotheses of this study were as follows:

1. The group of children who attended the Project Headstart program would express desirable emotional behavior and personality traits more frequently in kindergarten than

the group of children who did not receive preschool education.

2. The group of children who attended the Project Headstart program would be more enthusiastic and interested toward the kindergarten setting than the group of children who did not receive preschool education.

Method of Procedure

The questionnaire used in this study was modeled after the one used by Hazel Cushing (1934) in her study of the opinions of kindergarten teachers on the adjustment of nursery school children in kindergarten. The questionnaire consisted of three categories: social adaptability, negative personality traits, and the response of the child to the kindergarten situation. The first two categories were checked by the kindergarten teachers on a four-point frequency scale from always to never. The third category was checked by the teachers placing a check beside the term that best described the response of the child to the kindergarten situation. The teachers received a questionnaire for each subject in the study.

Scope and Limitation

The researcher had planned to use a larger sample, but due to difficulty in selecting children who were from the same socio-economic area and, who attended the same Project Headstart program during the same session, a larger sample could not be selected. The subjects used in the study were selected at random by the researcher from a population of fifty kindergarten children who attended the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Kankakee, Illinois. From the roster of fifty

children at the school the researcher selected fifteen children who had attended the 1966 summer Project Headstart program in Kankakee. From the same roster the researcher selected fifteen children who had not attended any preschool educational program prior to entering kindergarten, but who were residents of the same socio-economic area as the Project Headstart group. (See map in the appendix.) The total number of children used in the study was thirty. The residential area in which the subjects lived was a lower socio-economic area of the city as verified by a study done by the local Office of Economic Opportunity on the income levels of residents in the city of Kankakee.[7]

There were two kindergarten teachers used in the study as the raters of the subjects. The teachers were selected on the basis of being the kindergarten instructors in the school. At the time the researcher gave the questionnaires to the teachers she had planned to analyze the data in regard to the five-point frequency scale from always--usually--frequently--seldom--never. The researcher realized during the process of analyzing the data that there was no significant difference between the definitions of the terms usually and frequently. Since these two terms are practically synonymous, the researcher has combined the results of these two terms under one heading--usually. The final analysis of the data was, therefore, based on a four-point frequency scale from always--usually--seldom--never. Also, in the section of the child's response to the kindergarten situation, the results of the terms enthusiastic and interested were combined under the heading of enthusiastic.

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[7]Office of Economic Opportunity, "A Study on the Income Levels of Residents of Kankakee," Kankakee, Illinois, 1965, pp. 20-25.

The groups were not matched on variables such as sex, age, or IQ. The Project Headstart group was an average of six months younger than the non-Project Headstart group. The Project Headstart group had a daily attendance average of twenty days less in kindergarten than the non-Project Headstart group. Also, the subjects were rated after only eight weeks of attendance in kindergarten. This amount of time may well have been too short a time span over which the actual adjustment of the subjects could be adequately assessed. The majority of preschool and kindergarten adjustment studies have been conducted over a time period of at least nine months, and the researcher feels that a nine-month or longer time interval should continue to be employed in future studies.

Review of Literature

Teacher ratings on preschool children have often been used as the major research method in nursery school studies. The research literature points out that a number of problems may arise when teachers judge pupils. Prescott found that the most common problems were that teachers often based their judgments upon faulty or inadequate knowledge; they tended toward oversimplification; often engaged in emotional thinking; and projected their own experience into the situation to be judged.[8] The value of teacher ratings then, appears to depend to a large extent on the objectivity of the teachers making the judgments; and upon their understanding of the categories for rating the behavior. The reliability of ratings made by teachers has also been found to increase

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[8]Daniel A. Prescott, The Child in the Educative Process (New York: McGraw-Hill Press, 1957), p. 99.

considerably by using two or more raters who make independent judgments which are averaged to give a final schore.[9]

Cushing did a study to determine the influence of nursery school training on kindergarten adjustment as rated by kindergarten teachers. The experimental group in this study consisted of thirty-three kindergarten children who had nursery school experience, Twenty-five kindergarten children who had never had preschool training formed the control group. These fifty-eight subjects were rated by their kindergarten teacher on how well they had adjusted to health habits, social adaptability, use of the environment, and personality traits. The teacher checked on a five-point frequency scale from always to never, the responses which were characteristic of the subjects. They indicated also whether the behavior of the child was poorer than, better than, or average with reference to the kindergarten group. The children were rated at the time they began attending kindergarten and at the end of the first semester.[10]

The results of the study by Cushing showed that all differences in adjustment ratings between the experimental and the control group were insignificant. A slight, but not significant, superiority was shown by the control group on the rating categories of health habits, social adaptability, and personality traits. Practically all the nursery school children were rated as enthusiastic or interested in kindergarten. From this research, Crushing concluded that there was no

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[9]Gardner Murphy, Lois B. Murphy, and Theodore M. Newcomb, Experimental Social Psychology (New York: Harper Book Co., 1937), p. 868.

[10]Hazel M. Cushing, "A Tentative Report of the Influence of Nursery School Training Upon Kindergarten Adjustment as Reported by Kindergarten Teachers," Child Development, V (1934), pp. 304-314.

evidence pointing to the fact that nursery school children are inferior in kindergarten adjustment. However, this study did not provide evidence that nursery school children are in any way superior in performance in adjusting to kindergarten.[11]

Although this study was methodologically sound in many respects, it did have one major defect. The two groups of subjects were not matched for variables such as age, IQ, sex, and socio-economic background. Cushing later felt that her neglect in matching these variables could have influenced the results of the study. She then performed statistical tests on the data to determine whether the age and intelligence variables were distributed at random among the two groups of subjects. The nursery school children were found to be an average of four months younger than the control subjects, which according to Cushing was a statistically significant difference. The mean IQ of the nursery group was found to be 120, whereas that of the control subjects was 107.[12]

LaBerta W. Hattwick used length of time in attendance in nursery school as an independent variable in studing the changes in behavior of children. Her subjects consisted of two groups of 1o6 children who differed in length of time of nursery school attendance, but who were matched for chronological age, nationality, race, sex, and socio-economic level. The control group was rated six weeks after entering nursery, and the experimental group had attended nursery

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[11] Ibid., pp. 304-314.

[12] Ibid., pp. 304-314.

school for nine months before being rated. Each group was rated by their nursery school teachers. Hattwick felt that this time difference of about seven and one-half months of nursery school experience would be long enough to detect behavior changes, since it included the bulk of the school year. The children were rated by using a form which included sixty behavior items of routine habits and personality characteristics. Three different nursery school teachers rated each child, and the final rating on each item was an average of these three teachers' ratings. Each teacher's judgment was on how often the subjects displayed the behavior listed on the routine habit check list used in the study. The check list was set up on a frequency scale to indicate whether the child never showed the behavior items listed; expressed the behavior less than once a week; expressed the behavior several times a week; or whether he expressed the behavior daily. Ratings in the categories of several times a week, and daily were felt by Hattwick to be indicative of habitual tendencies, and the two groups of children were compared as to the percentage from each group showing these habitual tendencies.[13]

The results of this study showed that the experimental subjects were significantly higher in social adjustment categories (including: not fearing strange people, not shrinking from notice, and being fairly independent of adults) and sociability with other children categories (i.e., willingness to play with others, sharing, and refusing to give in easily), but were significantly lower in nervous tendencies (twisting hair, tenseness, wriggling, and restlessness) and in failure to

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[13]LaBerta W. Hattwick, "The Influence of Nursery School Attendance Upon the Behavior and Personality of the Preschool Child," Journal of Experimental Education, V (1936), pp. 180-190.

adjust to routine behavior (refusing food, dawdling, wetting self) than were the control group. Hattwick also found that the three-year-olds in the experimental group seemed to show the greatest advance over the three-year-olds in the control group in reference to compliance with nursery school routines. The four-year-olds in the experimental group showed a greater advance than the four-year-olds in the control group in techniques of social adjustment and habits of work.[14]

Dr. Max Wolff, senior research sociologist at the Center for Urban Education in New York, conducted a study to test the enduring effects of Project Headstart programs upon children. The study was sponsored by the Ferkauf Graduate School of Education at Yeshiva University and supported by funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity. Wolff and his colleagues used 551 children in thirty kindergarten classes in four New York public schools as the subjects in the study. The measuring tools used in the study included teacher evaluations, interviews of the children, classroom observations of the children, and written tests. The survey team systematically compared the kindergarten performances of 169 children who had participated in the Headstart program in the summer of 1965 with the performances of 383 non-Headstart classmates.

In Wolff's study the written tests were a form of the Caldwell preschool inventory test, a twenty-to-thirty minute examination divided into four sections. The first section tested the knowledge of the child's personal world name, address, parts of the body; the second tested knowledge of ordinal and numerical relations and concepts such as form, color, size, shape and motion. Of a possible score of twenty-six in the first

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[14] Ibid., pp. 180-190.

section of the test, the arithmetic mean of the Headstart children was 19.1 and the non-Headstart children 18.8 Similarly, small margins prevailed in other sections of the test except in the part on numbers and concepts such as size and color, where 383 non-Headstart children did slightly better than the Headstart children. Moreover, Wolff concluded that the preschool inventory test results were uniformly lower for Headstart children in classes in which the teaching was poor. Conversely, the Headstart children scored consistently higher than the non-Headstart children in classes with good teachers.[15] There were no indications by Wolff as to how he determined good and poor teachers.

The survey team developed four main criteria to compare the social and educational development of Headstart and non-Headstart children: (1) a child's adjustment to classroom routines, (2) his behavior toward his peers and teachers, (3) his speech, work and listening habits, and (4) his educational attainments. Only in the adjustment to routine category were there significant differences, and even these were equalized by the non-Headstart children after the first four months of kindergarten work. Nearly two-thirds of the Headstart children quickly adjusted to school, compared with forty per cent of their non-Headstart classmates, but by the end of the third month of kindergarten the non-Headstart children had equalized the differences. In the behavior toward classmates, the Headstart children adjusted more readily and generally rated higher than the non-Headstart children. But again, the edge was slight; also, ratings by the teachers showed

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[15]The New York Times, October 23, 1966, p. 1.

no significant differences between the two groups in behavior toward the teachers themselves. Similarly, the speech, work, and listening habits of the Headstart group were markedly better at the beginning of the kindergarten year; there were no measurable differences after six months. Too, after six months of kindergarten no significant differences could be found between the two groups in regard to educational achievements.[16]

The findings in this study confirmed that the Headstart program enriched the preschool child and left him with an unmistakable "thrist" for further knowledge. The study found also, that because of poor teaching or an uninspired curriculum in the public schools, this thrist went largely unquenched; and the other advantages of preschooling rapidly dissipated. The study thus indicated factors such as harassed teachers and mediocre curricula inhibited such cultivation, and the abilities of the two groups were equalized after a few months of kindergarten not because the non-Headstart children caught up with the Headstart children; but because the Headstart children failed to improve at the pace indicated by their preschool experience.[17] The report also made clear that the differences in the economic and cultural backgrounds between the two groups were marginal and had little or no effects on the findings in the study.

As a result of the study by Wolff and his colleagues, Sergeant Shriver stated that the present elementary school system was critically

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[16]Ibid., p. 1.

[17]Ibid., p. 1.

inadequate to meet the needs of children of poverty. He urged educators across the country to do the following: (1) provide one teacher for every fifteen children, (2) utilize new sources of educational manpower, such as, teacher aides and volunteers, (3) establish a program of tutorial assistance in which older students from high schools and colleges could take part, (4) establish associations that would involve parents in the activities of public schools other than the Parent-Teacher Association, and (5) initiate programs to train "childhood development" specialists who would work exclusively in every primary grades, diagnose and prescribe help by professionals, such as, social workers, psychologists and reading specialists.[18]

Other than the federal government's project programs for the culturally disadvantaged child, two of the earliest preschool programs for the culturally disadvantaged child were the Peabody Early Training Project near Nashville and the program of the Institute for Developmental Studies in New York City in 1965. Although the directors of these projects emphasized the importance of long-range follow-up studies to determine program effectiveness, preliminary results were reported. From the Peabody projects, substantial increase in IQ scores as measured by either the Stanford-Binet or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), were reported for the children in the experimental groups as compared with the children in the control groups. There were gains of five and six points in two experimental groups and losses of four and six points in two control groups. The children in experimental groups also had higher scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the

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[18]The New York Times, November 20, 1966, p. 1.

Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Ability, and when they entered the first grade they performed better on reading readiness tests. From the Institute for Development Studies, comparable difference were reported in the Stanford-Binet IQ scores between children who attended the experimental preschool program and the children who attended the control preschool program. As in the Peabody project, there were apparently control group losses as well as experimental group gains. Also, as before, the experimental group performed better on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.[19]

Similar findings as the ones above were reported in a study which was done in Philadelphia. The nursery school children gained about six points in Stanford-Binet IQ scores from mid-year in the nursery school to mid-year in the kindergarten. At the time of the testing in kindergarten, the nursery groups were on the average about eight points higher in IQ scores than the control groups with no nursery school experience. The nursery groups performed better than the control groups on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. A group verbal intelligence test reflected the effects of nursery school, but results of an individual nonverbal test showed no consistent differences between the nursery school group and the control groups. The nursery school groups, however, were rated as more casual, expressive, and flexible than the non-nursery school groups in reaction to tests and learning situations in kindergarten.[20]

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[19]Clay V. Brittain, "Effects of Preschool Education," Children, XIII (July-August, 1966), pp. 130-134.

[20]Ibid., pp. 130-134.

There are few studies on preschool program with negative findings. The most unequivocally negative findings to date, were reported by Alpern from a program in Indianapolis, Indiana. He reported that five-year-old children who attended a preschool program for seven months made substantial gains on the Metropolitan Readiness Test, but so did the children in the control group. In both groups, gains were statistically significant, but group differences were not significant. The experimental and control groups made slight and insignificant gains in Stanford-Binet IQ scores. On the basis of these findings Alpern was strongly skeptical about the value of short-ranged preschool programs. A follow-up study was made seventeen months later, and it showed no differences between the experimental and control subjects in their first grade scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test or in ratings by their teachers of academic motivation and progress.[21]

The studies previously referred to in this study had significant meaning to this study in varying ways. Several items from the questionnaire used in Cushing's study were used by the researcher in constructing her questionnaire. The researcher's method of procedure was similar to the method of procedure used by Hattwick, and basically the hypotheses in Hattwick's were the same as the hypotheses of the researcher. The studies reported by Alpern, Brittain, and Wolff all were geared toward finding out the effects preschool programs for the

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[21]George Alpern, The Failure of a Nursery School Enrichment Program for Culturally Disadvantaged Children, A Paper Presented at the 1966 Meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association, San Francisco, Conference, 1966, pp. 4-6.

culturally disadvantaged child had upon the child's adjustment and progress in the regular kindergarten classes as compared with the child who had no preschool education prior to entering the regular kindergarten classes. This study was done also to find out the effects a preschool education program had on the adjustment of children in regular kindergarten as compared with their classmates who had no preschool education prior to entering the regular kindergarten classes.

Definition of Terms

Non-Project Headstart: In this study this term was used to define the group of children used in the study without any preschool training in a setting such as a nursery or day care center prior to entering the regular kindergarten class.

Project Headstart: Is a program created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to give compensatory education to preschool children of poor families; it represents a national commitment to culturally deprived children based on the belief that the sooner they receive comprehensive quality education, the greater will be the opportunity for developing their full potentialities.[22]

Preschool: Was used in this study to define school programs designed for children who are within the age range of three to five years old, or/and to refer to children who are within the age range of three to five years old.

Socio-Economic: Was used in this study to define any group of people living in the same residential area who has an annual income level within the same range, and who shares common social characteristics such as language, educational attainment, and occupation.

Lower Socio-Economic Area: Was used in the study to mean the same as the term socio-economic with the additional meaning that the residents of the particular area have an annual income of $4,000 or less.

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[22]Minnie P. Berson, "Prekindergarten Programs," Illinois Education, LIV (January, 1966), pp. 219-222.

Culturally Disadvantaged: Was used in this study as it was defined by the Office of Economic Opportunity in Kankakee, Illinois, which is an assumption that children are inferior in academic performance; including poor language facility; constriction in dealing with symbolic and abstract ideas; narrowness of outlook because of the narrowness of the familiar environment; passivity and lack of curiosity; low self-esteem; and a lack of motivation for achievement; because of their environment. It also refers to the assumption that these children come from families who have an annual income of $4,000 or less.[23]

Effect: Was used in the study to describe the result of action, or the clear impression produced by a Project Headstart program upon a group of children who attended the program during the summer session of 1966.

Nursery: A school serving the needs of two, three, and four-year-old children by offering them experiences adapted to what is now known about growth needs at these age levels.[24]

Kindergarten: Refers to that year of school experience which immediately precedes the first grade.

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[23]Office of Economic Opportunity, "A Study on the Income Levels of Residents of Kankakee,: Kankakee, Illinois, 1965, p. 6.

[24]Katherine H. Read, The Nursery School (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1966), p. 23.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND FUNCTION OF THE AGENCY

First, the researcher would like to say that the agency had no direct relationship to the Project Headstart program. However, the agency is concerned about the available facilities for preschool training programs for preschool children in Kankakee. The agency is becoming increasingly interested in community programs for preschool children. It is the philosophy of the agency that preschool programs can help prevent the occurrence of emotional distrubance in young children.

As of July 1, 1966, the Downstate Regional Program of the Institute for Juvenile Research (a child guidance clinic) was terminated. The Institute for Juvenile Research (IJR) headquarters which was located at 907 South Wolcott Street, Chicago, continued its traditional activities of training, teaching, research, and service. On the above date the facilities and staff of the IJR's Downstate Regional Programs were transferred to the zone centers. The zone centers' concept is the division of the state into zones which includes different numbers of counties. Within each zone there is a mental health clinic or clinics to serve the population which is within that particular zone.[25]

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[25]"Herman M. Adler Zone Center for Children," An Agency Brochure, Champaign, Illinois (October, 1966), p. 1.

In 1961 the State Department of Mental Health began to decentralize its mental health programs to various zone centers in order to bring its services closer to citizens who needed them. The State of Illinois is divided into eight zones. The agency in which the researcher worked is located in zone VI. Zone VI is divided into sub-zones which include the following counties: sub-zone one--Livingston and McLean; sub-zone two--Dewitt, Piatt, and Macon; sub-zone three--Moultrie, Shelby, and Effingham; sub-zone four--Kankakee, Iroquois, and Ford; sub-zone five--Champaign and Vermilion; sub-zone six--Douglas, Edgan, Coles, Cumberland, and Clark. More than 8,000,000 people live within the six sub-zones. Of these, about 270,000 are under age eighteen.[26]

The State Department of Mental Health has organized its program in zone VI in a unique manner. It is divided into two separate services. Adult services for the eighteen counties are headquartered in the Adolf Meyer Center in Decatur. Services for children (under the age of eighteen) and their families in the eighteen counties are situated in the Herman M. Adler Zone Center in Champaign on South First Street, just beyond the Assembly Hall of the University of Illinois.[27]

One of the important functions of the Adler Center is to work toward the development of comprehensive local community mental health programs for emotionally distrubed, mentally ill, and mentally retarded children and their families. In carrying out its objective, the Adler

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[26]Ibid., p. 1.

[27]Ibid., p. 1.

staff tries not to duplicate existing services, but rather to work along with other agencies in assessing community needs. In addition to the assessment of needs, the Adler Center hopes to: (1) to assist communities in developing services to meet these needs and, (2) to develop or sponsor demonstration projects to illustrate possibilities resulting from these programs in order to enlist community support.[28]

Much of the efforts of Adler Center will be directed toward community organization programs to promote mental health and prevent the development of emotional and social breakdown in youngsters and their families. To this end, the aim is to offer to community agencies an array of consultative and training programs for both professional and lay persons. These programs may be designed for individuals or groups of psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers, as well as for nurses, teachers, ministers, juvenile law officers, and others working with children.[29]

The Structure of the Agency

The organizational structure and the administrative procedures of this program are designed especially to facilitate continuity of care for the individual client, to encourage the application of all available knowledge to practice, and to increase knowledge of both the substantive and the methodological aspects of the client care. Because these are paramount, organization and administration are first examined from the perspective they provide. The program

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[28]Ibid., p. 2.

[29]Ibid., p. 2.

outlined herein is operated under the auspices of the Illinois Department of Mental Health, and is designed to meet the needs and use resources of Zone VI.

The Extra-mural Programs and the Intra-mural Programs are designed to make community services and in-patient facilities which are directed by the Adler Zone Center inter-dependent. The Extra-mural Programs and Intra-mural Programs each is headed by an Assistant Superintendent who reports directly to the Superintendent of the Adler Zone Center. The Assistant Superintendent for Extra-mural Programs is charged with responsibility for deploying and utilizing much of the resources for direct and indirect service to citizens and communities of Zone VI. He works through six sub-zone supervisors, one in each of the pre-existing sub-zones. The Assistant Superintendent for Intra-mural Programs is responsibile for in-patient care in which children and adolescents receive intensive services.[30] Each sub-zone has its own staff including social workers, psychologist, psychiatrist, and other professional staff.

As indicated on the chart (included in appendix) the Superintendent reports to the Zone Director, thus reflecting the integral relationship of the Children's Services Program to the total Zone Program.

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[30]William P. Hurder, "Projected Program of Children's Services in Zone VI" (Illinois Department of Mental Health, 1966), p. 3.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF DATA

It seems pertinent to give a brief description of all data collected even though, tables are not used for analysis of all the data.

The teachers who participated in the study as the raters were the only kindergarten teachers in Abraham Lincoln Kindergarten, Kankakee, Illinois. The teachers were willing to participate in the study, however, they were not told what hypothetical results the researcher had predicted. (See letter in the appendix.) The names of the teachers were included on the questionnaire for no relevant purpose to the study in regard to the analysis of the data, and the same is true for the names of the subjects used in the study.

The following table shows the age and sex distribution of the children participating in the study. The mean age of each group was obtained by dividing the number of children in each group into the total sum of the ages of the children in that particular group.

As shown in the table on the following page, there were six males and seven females who were five years of age in the Project Headstart group. There were two females in the Project Headstart group who were only four years old. The mean age for the females in this group was 4.8 years, while that of the males in the same group was 5.0 years. The mean age for the total Project Headstart group was 4.8 years. Also shown in the same table were the age and sex

distribution of the non-Project Headstart group. There were one male and one female who were six years of age in this group. There were seven males and six females who were five years old, and there were no four year old children in this group as compared with the two in the Project Headstart group. There, however, were no six year old children in the Project Headstart group as compared with the two in the non-Project Headstart group. The mean age for the males in the non-Project Headstart group was 5.3 years, and that of the females was 5.2 years. The mean age for the non-Project Headstart group was 5.2 years, which was a total of six months older than the Project Headstart group.

TABLE 1

AGE AND SEX OF CHILDREN IN THE
PROJECT HEADSTART GROUP AND THE NON-PROJECT HEADSTART GROUP

Project Headstart				Non-Project Headstart			
* Age	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total M & F	Age	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total M & F
6	..	..	..	6	1	1	2
5	6	7	13	5	7	6	13
4	..	2	2	4	..	..	..
Total Children	6	9	15	Total Children	8	7	15
Mean Age	5.0	4.8	4.8	Mean Age	5.3	5.2	5.2

*Age is shown by years, and M and F stand for males and females.

Table 2 shows the total attendance in kindergarten of the Project and non-Project children. The total number of days in attendance of each group was obtained by adding the sum of each child's attendance in the respective groups. The mean days of attendance of each child was arrived at by dividing the number of children in each group into the total number of days of attendance for that particular group.

TABLE 2

ATTENDANCE OF PROJECT HEADSTART GROUP
AND THE NON-PROJECT HEADSTART GROUP IN KINDERGARTEN

Project Headstart		Non-Project Headstart	
Total No. of Children	Total No. of Days	Total No. of Children	Total No. of Days
15	605	15	649
Mean Attendance Per Child: 40.3 days		Mean Attendance Per Child: 43.2 days	

As seen in Table 2, there was very little difference in the number of days of attendance by the Project Headstart group as compared with the non-Project Headstart group in regard to daily average attendance per child. The average of each child in the Project Headstart group was 40.3 days, and the average daily attendance of each child in the non-Project Headstart group was 43.2 days. This finding meant that each non-Project Headstart child attended kindergarten about three days more than each child in the Project Headstart group.

Table 3 shows the social adaptability of the two groups in regard to emotional behavior. The following items were listed as

ways the children may or may not have expressed behavior in this category: (1) seeks companionship with other children, (2) cooperates in group projects, (3) gives creative suggestions in group activities, (4) respects rights of others, (5) is kind and helpful to others, (6) adjusts readily to new situations, (7) shows a reasonable degree of self control in conflict with others, (8) appears happy and content in school environment, (9) is willing to accept authority when occasion demands, (10) is satisfied with normal amount of attention from teacher, (11) accepts correction in good spirit, (12) refrains from baby talk, (13) shows a willingness to share, (14) shows curiosity and interest in surroundings, (15) approaches other children readily, and (16) is cordial to strangers. In this category a high frequency of occurrence of these behavior items indicated desirable responses. The table shows the expression of behavior of each respective group by percentages. The table also shows the expression of behavior by individual numbers in regard to the four-point frequency scale from always--seldom--usually--never. Each subject was individually rated by his teacher on this four-point frequency scale in regard to how often the child expressed behavior indicative of the behavior items listed above.

The Project Headstart group expressed its highest frequency of behavior under the label of usually; which was fifty-six per cent of the group, and 8.4 children in the group. The two extremes always and never obtained almost an equal amount of frequencies. In the Project Headstart group thirteen per cent or 2.0 children expressed the desirable behavior at all times. While twelve per cent of the group

or 1.8 children presented desirable behavior at no time. The group was rated as having nineteen per cent or 2.8 children seldom responding in a desirable manner.

TABLE 3

SOCIAL ADAPTABILITY* OF THE PROJECT AND NON-PROJECT HEADSTART GROUPS BY EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR AS DETERMINED BY TEACHER RATINGS OF PUPILS

Project Headstart			Non-Project Headstart		
Expression of Behavior	No. of Children	Percentage	Expression of Behavior	No. of Children	Percentage
Always	2.0	13.0	Always	7.9	52.0
Usually	8.4	56.0	Usually	6.7	45.0
Seldom	2.8	19.0	Seldom	0.3	02.0
Never	1.8	12.0	Never	0.1	01.0
Total	15.0	100.0	Total	15.0	100.0

*Social adaptability is a composite of the following behavior items: (1) seeks companionship with other children, (12) cooperates in group projects, (3) gives creative suggestions in group activities, (4) respects rights of others, (5) is kind and helpful to others, (6) adjusts readily to new situation, (7) shows a reasonable degree of self control in conflict with others, (8) appears happy and content in school environment, (9) is willing to accept authority when occasion demands, (10) is satisfied with normal amount of attention from teacher, (11) accepts correction in good spirit, (12) refrains from baby talk, (13) shows a willingness to share, (14) shows curiosity and interest in surroundings, (15) approaches other children readily, and (16) is cordial to strangers.

The non-Project Headstart group as shown in Table 3 expressed its highest frequency of behavior under the label of always which was fifty-two per cent or 7.9 children in the group. The desirable responses were usually presented by forty-five per cent of the group or 6.7

children in the group. There was very little difference between the frequency of behavior seldon and never presented by the non-Project Headstart group. The behavior was presented by 0.2 per cent of the group or 0.3 of a child under the label of seldom. One per cent of the group or 0.1 of a child never expressed behavior indicative of the items listed in the category of social adaptability.

Table 4 shows the expression of the children by negative personality traits. These negative personality traits were listed as indexes to the behavior items listed in the social adaptability category. The following negative traits were listed as ways the children may or may not have expressed their behavior in kindergarten: (1) crying, (2) sulking, (3) pouting, (4) temper tantrums, (5) negativism, (6) fighting with other children, (7) teasing, (8) selfishness, (9) whining, (10) cruelty, (11) tenseness, (12) timidity, (13) secretiveness, (14) distractibility, (15) destructiveness, (16) day dreaming, (17) emotional instability, (18) enuresis (diurnal), (19) finger sucking, (20) masturbation, (21) nail biting, (22) nose picking, and (23) hyperactivity. In this category the less frequent the child showed behavior indicative of the negative traits listed above, the more favorable was his behavior.

Table 4 shows that the Project Headstart group had two per cent of the group or 0.3 of a child always expressing these negative personality traits in this category. There were ten per cent of the Project Headstart group or 1.5 children in this group who usually exhibited these personality traits. Twenty per cent or 3.0 children were rated as seldom presenting these same negative personality traits. The

largest per cent of the Project Headstart group which was sixty-eight per cent or 10.2 children were rated as never having displayed these negative personality traits, thus an indication of their favorable behavior. Therefore, the majority of the Project Headstart group was rated as expressing behavior that was favorable.

TABLE 4

EXPRESSION OF NEGATIVE PERSONALITY TRAITS*OF THE PROJECT AND NON-PROJECT HEADSTART GROUPS AS DETERMINED BY TEACHER RATINGS OF PUPILS

Project Headstart			Non-Project Headstart		
Expression of Behavior	No. of Children	Per-centage	Expression of Behavior	No. of Children	Per-centage
Always	0.3	02.0	Always	..	..
Usually	1.5	10.0	Usually	0.2	02.0
Seldom	3.0	20.0	Seldom	1.4	09.0
Never	10.2	68.0	Never	13.4	89.0
Total	15.0	100.0	Total	15.0	100.0

*The negative personality traits referred to are the following: (1) crying, (2) sulking, (3) pouting, (4) temper tantrums, (5) negativism, (6) fighting with other children, (7) teasing, (8) selfishness, (9) whining, (10) cruelty, (11) tenseness, (12) timidity, (13) secretiveness, (14) distractibility, (15) destructiveness, (16) day dreaming, (17) emotional instability, (18) enuresis (diurnal), (19) finger sucking, (20) masturbation, (21) nail biting, (22) nose picking, (23) hyperactivity.

Also shown in Table 4 were the findings of the non-Project Headstart group in the category of the negative personality traits. No percentage of this group was rated as always manifesting the

listed negative traits. A small portion of the group, 0.2 of a child or two per cent of the group was rated as usually demonstrating these negative personality traits. The group was rated as having 1.4 children or nine per cent of the group as seldom presenting these traits. The majority of the non-Project Headstart group was rated as never showing these negative personality traits. So, in the project Headstart group, the non-Project Headstart group, too, had the greatest per cent or number of children in this category who expressed behavior that was favorable.

TABLE 5

RESPONSE OF THE PROJECT AND NON-PROJECT HEADSTART GROUPS TO THE KINDERGARTEN SITUATION AS DETERMINED BY TEACHER RATINGS OF PUPILS

Project Headstart			Non-Project Headstart		
Expression of Behavior	No. of Children	Per-centage	Expression of Behavior	No. of Children	Per-centage
Enthusiastic	11.0	73.0	Enthusiastic	15.0	100.0
Indifferent	4.0	27.0	Indifferent	..	..
Bored	..	..	Bored	..	..
Rebellious	..	..	Rebellious	..	..
Total	15.0	100.0	Total	15.0	100.0

The above table shows the response of the two groups of children to the kindergarten situation as rated by their teachers. The children were judged as being enthusiastic, indifferent, bored, or rebellious to the kindergarten situation.

Table 5 shows that the Project Headstart group was rated as having seventy-three per cent of the group or eleven children as enthusiastic in the kindergarten situation. There, however, was a small per cent of twenty-seven or four children rated as indifferent in the kindergarten situation. The non-Project Headstart group was rated as being totally enthusiastic in the kindergarten situation, which means all fifteen children or 100 per cent of the non-Project Headstart group was enthusiastic in the kindergarten situation.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a group of children who attended a Project Headstart program was better adjusted in kindergarten than a group of children who did not receive preschool education prior to entering kindergarten.

The subjects in the study were selected at random from a population of fifty kindergarten children who attended the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Kankakee, Illinois. There was a total of fifteen children in each of the two groups which made a total of thirty children used in this study. The subjects were individually rated by their kindergarten teachers after eight weeks of attendance in kindergarten. Two teachers were used in the study, and they were the only kindergarten teachers employed by Abraham Lincoln Elementary School.

The subjects were not matched for variables such as age, sex, or IQ. All subjects, however, were from the same socio-economic area, which was the lower socio-economic area. There was a slight difference in the mean age of the two groups. The non-Project Headstart group was an average of six months older than the Project Headstart group.

The hypotheses of the researcher were not supported by the findings in the study. According to the findings of this study the

non-Project Headstart group was better adjusted in kindergarten than the Project Headstart group which was the reverse of the hypothetical prediction of the researcher.

Results

In the first category of social adaptability of the groups by emotional behavior the non-Project Headstart group expressed the desirable behavior more frequently and in a larger percentage than the Project Headstart group. In the second category of negative personality traits the non-Project Headstart group again exhibited less negative personality traits than the Project Headstart group. The hypothesis of the researcher that the Project Headstart group would express the desirable emotional behavior more frequently in kindergarten than the non-Project Headstart group was not supported by the findings in the study. A secondary hypothesis that the Project Headstart group would be more enthusiastic toward the kindergarten situation was also not supported by the findings in the study.

Implications for Future Research

This study has implications for social workers, teachers, other professionals and laymen because the results tend to show that there may be some connection between the social and emotional adjustment of children, and possibly their academic achievements.

For the most part, the results of the study tend to support the findings of Prescott (Prescott, 1957) that the value of ratings by teachers appear to depend to a large extent upon the objectivity of the teachers making the judgment. Prescott made this conclusion

after finding that the most common problems inherent when teachers judge pupils were: they tended toward oversimplication; often based their judgments upon faulty or inadequate knowledge; often engaged in emotional thinking; and projected their own experiences into the situation to be judged. The findings also tend to supplement the findings of Max Wolff, a research sociologist, who did a study on the progress children made in Project Headstart programs and the enduring effects of the program. The findings of Wolff which were released to the public on October 23, 1966 by news media confirmed the belief that Project Headstart programs enriched the preschool children and left them with an unmistakable "thirst" for further knowledge that the regular elementary school programs did not provide. A total of 168 Project Headstart children were compared on their performances in kindergarten with 383 non-Project Headstart children in kindergarten. Wolff found that at the beginning of the kindergarten term the Project Headstart children showed considerable gains over their non-Project Headstart classmates. However, after about an average of six months in kindergarten, these gains had been equalized by the non-Project Headstart children.

The findings in the researcher's study even though, based on a much smaller sample than that of the study by Wolff, tend to indicate that there may be a need for the regular kindergarten program at Abraham Lincoln School to set up a curriculum that would provide means to meet or fulfill the "thirst" for additional knowledge that children receive in Project Headstart programs. Even though, there are no specific findings in this study that would confirm the

assumption that the curriculum at Abraham Lincoln School for kindergarten classes should be modified; one can infer from the findings that the Project Headstart child is inhibited from improving at the pace supposedly indicated by his preschool experience in the Project Headstart program.

As a result of the findings in this study the researcher would like to make the following recommendations and observations:

1. A follow up longitudinal study should be made.

2. A larger sample should be used in a similar study, and the subjects should be matched for variables such as age, sex, education of parents, IQ, and socio-economic background.

3. A methodological approach other than ratings by teachers should be used in future study, so that the possibility of subjectivity of the raters would not be a factor.

4. I would suggest that the succeeding study's methodology include several measuring tools such as: interviews of the children by someone other than the teacher, and some form of projective tests for the children.

5. Even if the researcher had succeeded in matching the non-Project Headstart group and the Project Headstart group according to age, family background, religion, education of parents, etc., the researcher would still be faced with the problem of determining the significance of the difference between the two groups of children--can these differences be attributed to chance variations? The absence of statistical tests of significance weakens the import of the present study.

6. It may well be that the researcher's major assumption that children who are well-adjusted socially and emotionally make greater academic achievements than children who are not well-adjusted socially and emotionally is faulty. It would be interesting for a future study on this subject to ascertain whether or not Project Headstart children, regardless of their social and emotional adjustment, make greater academic achievements.

APPENDIX

November 2, 1966

Abraham Lincoln Kindergarten
1440 East Court Street
Kankakee, Illinois 60901

Dear Sir:

I am a social worker at Children's Services, Department of Mental Health here in Kankakee (originally known as IJR), and I am doing a Master's thesis on the following subject: "Are Project Head-start Children Better Adjusted in Kindergarten Than Children That Had no Preschool Training Prior to Entering Kindergarten."

I have selected students from your class as a part of my sample for this study. Included are the students' names and a questionnaire for each child.

Please read each question and check the appropriate space--from Always to Never--according to the behavior the child exhibits, and check the other questions according to your evaluation. After completion of the questionnaires, please return to the Principal, Miss Mayo, who has given me permission to conduct this study within this school.

Even though the student's and teacher's names are included on the questionnaire, they will not be included in the written composition of the thesis.

Thank you for your cooperation, and if there are any questions, please feel free to call me.

Yours truly,

(Miss) Elva A. Miller
Social Worker

EAM/pjw

STREET MAP
and
STREET INDEX

Kankakee

Bradley

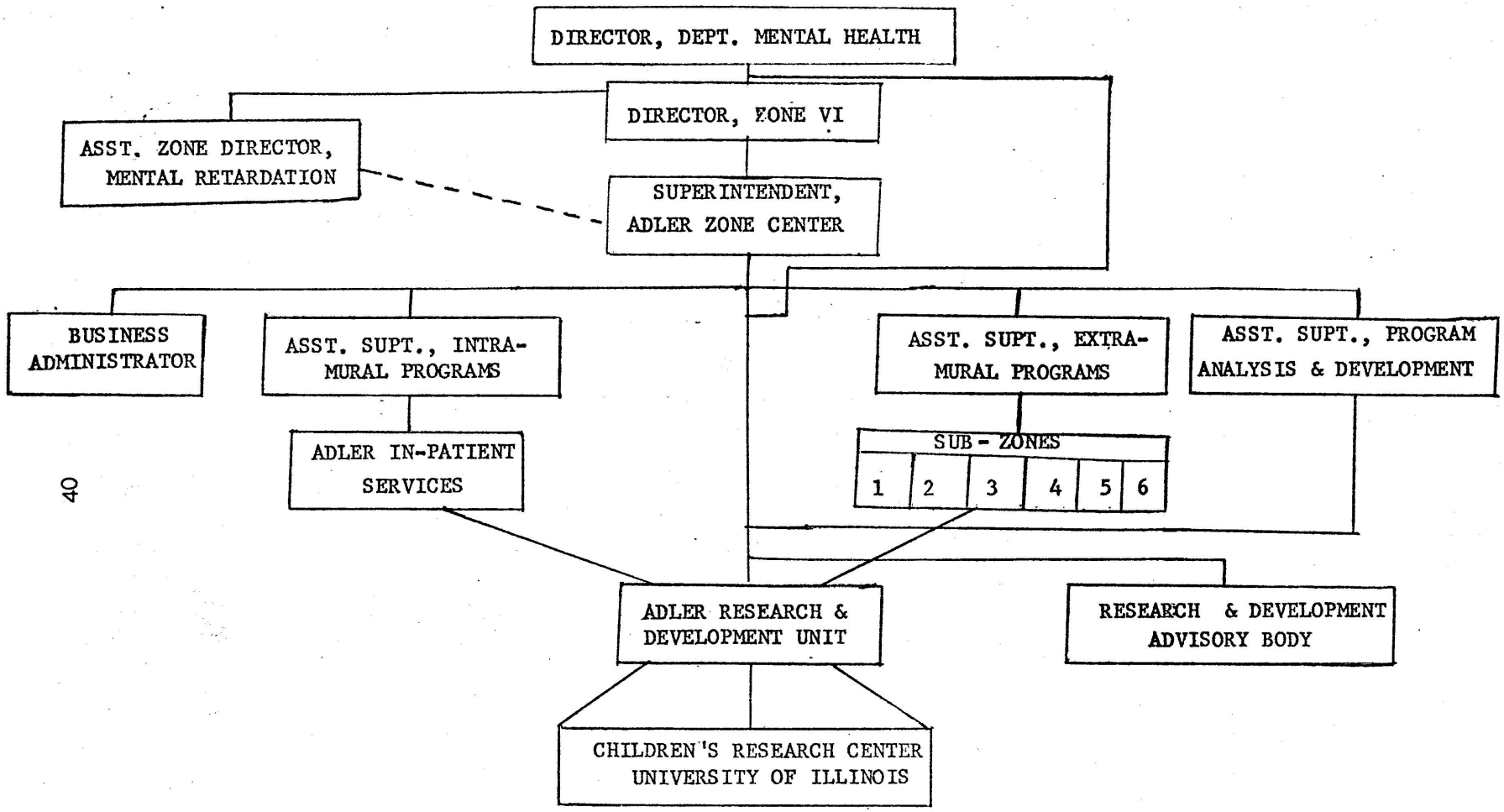
Bourbonnais

Aroma Park

Presented to you by the advertisers in conjunction with the Kankakee Guide & Directory 1966 - 67 issue
and distributed by the Greater Kankakee Chamber of Commerce

CHART I

CHILDREN"S SERVICES IN ZONE VI OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH



BOURBONNAIS AREA

BRADLEY AREA

KANKAKEE AREA

AROMA PARK AREA

RURAL AREA

1. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICE.
2. COUNTY COURT HOUSE.
3. CITY HALL.
4. ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL.
5. RIVERSIDE HOSPITAL.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Child Name _____ Date _____

Age _____ Sex _____

Attended Project Headstart: Yes _____ No _____

Total attendance in Project Headstart _____

Total attendance in kindergarten _____

Kindergarten teacher _____

Go through questions and place a check in the appropriate blank.

Method of Scoring

A--Child ALWAYS expresses behavior

U--Child USUALLY expresses behavior

F--Child FREQUENTLY expresses behavior

S--Child SELDOM expresses behavior

N--Child NEVER expresses behavior

Social Adaptability-Emotional Behavior

	A	U	F	S	N
Seeks companionship with other children	_	_	_	_	_
Cooperated in group projects	_	_	_	_	_
Gives creative suggestions in group activities	_	_	_	_	_
Respects rights of others	_	_	_	_	_
Is kind and helpful to others	_	_	_	_	_
Adjusts readily to new situations	_	_	_	_	_
Shows a reasonable degree of self control in conflict with others	_	_	_	_	_
Appears happy and content in school environment	_	_	_	_	_

	A	U	F	S	N
Is willing to accept authority when occasion demands	_	_	_	_	_
Is satisfied with normal amount of attention from teacher	_	_	_	_	_
Accepts correction in good spirit	_	_	_	_	_
Refrains from baby talk	_	_	_	_	_
Shows a willingness to share	_	_	_	_	_
Shows curiosity and interest in sourroundings	_	_	_	_	_
Does child approach other children readily	_	_	_	_	_
Is he cordial to strangers	_	_	_	_	_

Personality Traits	A	U	F	S	N
Check the degree to which the child shows the following behavior:					
Crying	_	_	_	_	_
Sulking	_	_	_	_	_
Pouting	_	_	_	_	_
Temper Tantrums	_	_	_	_	_
Negativism	_	_	_	_	_
Fighting with other children	_	_	_	_	_
Teasing	_	_	_	_	_
Selfishness	_	_	_	_	_
Whining	_	_	_	_	_
Cruelty	_	_	_	_	_
Tenseness	_	_	_	_	_
Timidity	_	_	_	_	_
Secretiveness	_	_	_	_	_
Distractibility	_	_	_	_	_

	A	U	F	S	N
Destructiveness	_	_	_	_	_
Day dreaming	_	_	_	_	_
Emotional instability	_	_	_	_	_
Enuresis (diurnal)	_	_	_	_	_
Finger sucking	_	_	_	_	_
Masturbation	_	_	_	_	_
Nail biting	_	_	_	_	_
Nose picking	_	_	_	_	_
Hyperactivity	_	_	_	_	_

Check the term which best describes the child's response to the kindergarten situation.

Enthusiastic _____ Interested _____

Indifferent _____ Bored _____ Rebellious _____

Thank you for your cooperation in filling out this questionnaire.

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